

**Minutes of the Regular Meeting
of the Massachusetts Board of Elementary and Secondary Education
Tuesday, March 28, 2017
8:30 a.m. –12:20 p.m.
Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
75 Pleasant Street, Malden, MA**

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Present:

Paul Sagan, Chair, Cambridge
James Morton, Vice-Chair, Boston
Ed Doherty, Boston
Margaret McKenna, Boston
Nathan Moore, Chair, Student Advisory Council, Scituate
Michael Moriarty, Holyoke
Pendred Noyce, Boston
James Peyser, Secretary of Education
Mary Ann Stewart, Lexington

Mitchell D. Chester, Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, Secretary to the Board

Members of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education Absent:

Katherine Craven, Brookline
Roland Fryer, Cambridge

Chair Sagan called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Board members introduced themselves.

Commissioner Chester noted major milestones on the Board's agenda today: the revised ELA and mathematics curriculum frameworks, ESSA state plan, and next-generation MCAS. He updated the Board on his recent attendance at the CCSSO meeting with Secretary DeVos in Washington, D.C. Commissioner Chester said he is keeping an eye on potential cuts to the federal education budget, noting that about 60 percent of the Department's budget is federally funded. Commissioner Chester commented on the successful launch of the Massachusetts Early College Initiative on March 23, 2017. The Commissioner noted the recent NCTQ award to the Boston Public Schools. He said the Department would be issuing guidance on the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Endrew F. v. Douglas County School District*, which addresses the level of educational benefit that school districts must provide to students with disabilities under the federal special education law (the IDEA).

Secretary Peyser provided an overview of the event launching the Massachusetts Early College Initiative. He said he was encouraged by the turnout and support for the Initiative, which will prepare more students for college and help close the achievement gap. Ms. McKenna said the Initiative gives hope to those students who may not have the financial means to attend college. Chair Sagan stated he will be in touch with Chair Chris Gabrieli of the Board of Higher Education to discuss the work of the Early College Joint Committee.

Chair Sagan welcomed Ryan Leung, Jeb Jacob, Talia Blatt, and Jeff Zhu, students from Lexington High School who are members of Project Finance, a student-run organization that promotes financial literacy in high schools and works to improve the way financial literacy is taught. The students presented the results of the Project Finance Financial Literacy Survey. They requested that the Board review the Council of Economic Education's (CEE) National Standards for Financial Literacy for voluntary implementation by districts. Chair Sagan commended the students and their faculty advisor, William Cole, on their work and said the Commissioner will look into next steps. Commissioner Chester thanked the students for their presentation. He said the Department has been working with the State Treasurer's office on financial literacy and he will provide a follow-up to the Board at a future meeting.

Statements from the Public

1. Jonathan C. Rappaport, Executive Director, Arts|Learning, addressed the Board on the State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act.
2. Lisa Guisbond, Executive Director, Citizens for Public Schools, addressed the Board on the State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act.
3. Gerry Mroz, parent, addressed the Board on the State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act.
4. Katharina Elbert, parent, addressed the Board on the State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act.
5. Laura Trendel, parent, addressed the Board on the State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act.
6. Audrey Winkler, parent, addressed the Board on the State Plan for the Every Student Succeeds Act.
7. Anne M. Fallon, parent, addressed the Board on the State Plan for Every Student Succeeds Act.
8. Robert Flynn, former Principal of the Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School, addressed the Board on the Dorchester Collegiate Academy Charter School closure process.

Approval of Minutes

Chair Sagan noted a misspelling of a name in the minutes, to be corrected.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education approve the minutes of the February 28, 2017 Regular Meeting and the February 27, 2017 Special Meeting.

The vote was unanimous.

Chair Sagan asked Mr. Moore and Ms. Stewart to update the members on their recent trip to Washington, D.C. to attend the National Association of State Boards of Education (NASBE)

2017 Legislative Conference. Mr. Moore and Ms. Stewart briefly discussed the State Board Insight database which was developed by NASBE to track all topics considered by state boards of education each month. They commented on their visit with the legislative staff of Senator Elizabeth Warren and Congresswoman Katherine Clark. Chair Sagan thanked both members for their participation on behalf of the Board.

Ms. Noyce provided an update on the meeting of the Commissioner's Performance Evaluation Committee, which took place prior to the Board meeting this morning. Ms. Noyce said the committee reviewed the performance criteria and the Commissioner's goals, and the next step will be to interview Board members, executive senior staff of the Department, and a few others. The committee will present its recommendations to the Board at the June meeting.

Chair Sagan requested that Item 2 on the agenda relative to an update on the Lawrence Public Schools be taken up first to accommodate the students from Lawrence who traveled here to perform for the Board. Chair Sagan welcomed Lawrence Receiver/Superintendent Jeff Riley, Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston, and Ventura Rodriguez, Director of Strategic Transformation. Mr. Riley said Lawrence is serious about participation in the arts and introduced the students to perform a medley of songs from various productions.

Chair Sagan thanked the students at the conclusion of their performance and expressed the Board's deep appreciation.

Lawrence Public Schools (Level 5 District) Progress Report by Supt./Receiver Jeff Riley

Mr. Riley expressed his pride for the students, teachers, and parents of Lawrence. He presented an overview of the current state of the Lawrence schools. Mr. Riley highlighted that the graduation rate has improved over 19 points and the dropout rate has decreased by more than half since 2011. Mr. Riley noted the significant increase of active employees who currently reside in Lawrence. He said a real sense of pride has been embraced by the community. Mr. Riley outlined his road map for strengthening special education and highlighted other priorities in education, including the services provided at the Family Resources Center, capital improvement projects proposed and underway, the high school redesign initiative, and full scholarships awarded to two Lawrence High School students by Babson College.

Ms. McKenna asked Mr. Riley about the status of the breakfast in the classroom program. Mr. Riley said Lawrence is a universal breakfast program site and while all students have access to breakfast, the system has been decentralized and each school has autonomy to design the program in a way that meets the needs of that school community and encourages student participation. He added that this topic will be brought up for discussion with the school principals. Commissioner Chester concluded by congratulating Mr. Riley on the outstanding progress that the Lawrence schools have made under his leadership. He noted that Lawrence was the poorest community in Massachusetts and when the state placed the district in receivership, the state was paying 90% of the school budget and the graduation rate was only 50%. Commissioner Chester added that while the job is not yet done, the students in Lawrence are receiving a much stronger education than before, and the system is constantly improving.

Michelle Ryan, Randolph High School Social Studies Teacher, 2015 Massachusetts Milken Educator

Chair Sagan and Commissioner Chester welcomed Ms. Michelle Ryan to address the Board. Ms. Ryan is the state's 43rd Milken Award winner and chairs the Social Studies Department at Randolph High School. Ms. Ryan discussed the importance of equity and closing the achievement gap. She described her experience in teaching her history classes. She said civics should be included throughout the History and Social Science curriculum framework, to help students analyze and engage in civic life. Chair Sagan thanked Ms. Ryan for her presentation.

Revised English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics Curriculum Frameworks

Commissioner Chester introduced Senior Associate Commissioner Heather Peske, Ron Noble, Director of Integration and Strategy, Rachel Bradshaw, ELA-Literacy Curriculum revisions content lead, and Connie Varoudakis, Math Curriculum revisions content lead. Commissioner Chester said this is a milestone; the curriculum standards are the bedrock of our educational system, and Massachusetts has a proud history of setting strong standards. The Commissioner said we periodically review and revise the standards. Commissioner Chester said these 2017 standards are the Commonwealth's own, drawn from the best of our frameworks and input from hundreds of educators throughout Massachusetts.

Secretary Peyser thanked Commissioner Chester, Ms. Peske and the team, including Barbara Libby and Susan Wheltle. He stated the process has been inclusive, transparent, and thorough. Secretary Peyser said the changes are not radical shifts but represent significant improvements and will lead to better outcomes for our students.

Ms. Peske acknowledged Ms. Libby and Ms. Wheltle in particular, who served as consultants on the revision process in mathematics and ELA/Literacy, respectively. Ms. Libby is the retired Director of ESE's Office of Science, Technology/Engineering and Mathematics and Ms. Wheltle is the retired Director of ESE's Office of Literacy and Humanities. They led ESE's previous frameworks writing and review panels in 1995-97, 2000-2004, and 2007-2010.

Ms. Peske provided an overview of the revisions. She acknowledged the preK-12 educators, higher education faculty, and stakeholders who contributed their time and feedback in this process. Ms. Bradshaw provided information on the public comment survey results in English Language Arts and Literacy and the Department's response. Ms. Varoudakis did the same with the Mathematics revisions. In closing, Ms. Peske outlined next steps, which include copyediting the revisions, transmitting the frameworks to the Joint Committee on Education, making them available statewide, providing implementation support to districts, and aligning the next-generation MCAS with the revised standards for the spring of 2018 administration.

Chair Sagan thanked the team for their calm, steady, detailed, and thoughtful work.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with

Chapter 69, Sections 1D and 1E of the Mass. General Laws, hereby adopts the revised *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for English Language Arts and Literacy* and the revised *Massachusetts Curriculum Framework for Mathematics*.

Further, that the Board directs the Commissioner to distribute the new frameworks to the Joint Committee on Education for their information, and to school districts and other interested parties throughout the Commonwealth for use in improving curriculum, instruction, and assessment in English Language Arts/Literacy and Mathematics.

Further, that the Board extends its appreciation to the staff of the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and the many individuals and groups statewide that helped to revise and strengthen the frameworks.

The vote was unanimous.

State Plan for Every Student Succeeds Act: Advancing the Commonwealth's Commitment to Equity and Excellence

Commissioner Chester noted this is the final discussion before the Department submits the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) plan to the U.S. Department of Education on April 3, 2017. He said the plan is not a shift in direction; it reflects our core work. Commissioner Chester referenced portions of his memo and highlighted the principles used to select indicators to be part of the accountability index. The Commissioner discussed the statewide agenda around early-grade literacy, middle-grade math, a broad liberal arts education curriculum for all students, opportunities for career preparation, and other elements of the plan. He said student learning is the core work of schools and the approach outlined in the plan balances the robustness of the accountability system with simplicity and transparency. He noted that the Department will be reporting on more opportunity indicators, including the arts. Chair Sagan said the Board does not have to vote on the plan, the Commissioner submits it, and the Governor has the opportunity to sign off on it. Chair Sagan added that the plan maintains Massachusetts control over our educational agenda.

Senior Associate Commissioner Russell Johnston and Associate Commissioner Rob Curtin presented highlights from the plan and responded to questions. Mr. Johnston provided an overview of the ESSA plan, feedback from stakeholders, refinements made to the February draft, and next steps. Mr. Curtin reviewed the refinements to the school and district accountability system including the requirements, accountability design principles, core accountability measures, and the proposed accountability approach.

Secretary Peyser stated that he endorses the plan, which he believes is very strong; it articulates strategies and priorities we are already pursuing and sets a framework for work to come. He said there is flexibility to seek amendments if needed, and by submitting the plan now, we can take advantage of the minimal constraints currently in place from the federal government and as we head into a new school year, we can signal to the field more continuity than change. The

Secretary congratulated the Department for its work on the plan and said Governor Baker has been briefed on the plan and should be able to sign it.

Mr. Doherty stated that many in the field believe we should delay in submitting the plan, but he is aware that it will be submitted on April 3, 2017. Mr. Doherty said teachers feel the accountability system is headed in the wrong direction. He expressed concern that schools and districts in the bottom twenty percent are labeled as underperforming and they tend to be the poorest schools and districts; poverty is a significant contributor.

Mr. Moriarty voiced his support for the plan. He said he believes the status quo in poor districts needs to be challenged and early literacy must be a priority. Commissioner Chester informed the Board that the U.S. Department of Education is expected to review and provide feedback on the plan within 120 days. Ms. Noyce said this is our plan and we should go forward confidently with what we believe is the best approach for our students. Ms. Noyce and Ms. McKenna both noted the comments this morning from parents about gifted and talented students, and asked the Commissioner to provide information on that issue to the Board over the next few months. Chair Sagan said the Commissioner will proceed with filing the plan and the Board will have further discussions on the system design in the late fall of 2017.

Next-Generation MCAS: New Achievement Level Descriptors

Chair Sagan noted that the Board discussed this item at last month's meeting and had requested some minor edits, reflected in the version presented this month. Commissioner Chester thanked Deputy Commissioner Jeff Wulfson, Associate Commissioner Michol Stapel, and Bob Lee, Chief MCAS Analyst, for their work. He said the next-generation MCAS program is a major milestone after 20 years of the legacy MCAS, and almost all districts will administer the next-generation MCAS via computer in grades 4 and 8 this year. In response to a question from Mr. Moore, Chair Sagan clarified that these descriptors apply to the next-generation MCAS tests being administered in grades 3-8, not to high school MCAS tests.

On a motion duly made and seconded, it was:

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. c. 69, §§ 1B and 1I, hereby adopts the following achievement level categories and policy-level descriptors for the next-generation MCAS tests, as recommended by the Commissioner:

Exceeding Expectations

A student who performed at this level exceeded grade-level expectations by demonstrating mastery of the subject matter.

Meeting Expectations

A student who performed at this level met grade-level expectations and is academically on-track to succeed in the current grade in this subject.

Partially Meeting Expectations

A student who performed at this level partially met grade-level expectations in this subject. The school, in consultation with the student's parent/guardian, should consider whether the student needs additional academic assistance to succeed in this subject.

Not Meeting Expectations

A student who performed at this level did not meet grade-level expectations in this subject. The school, in consultation with the student's parent/guardian, should determine the coordinated academic assistance and/or additional instruction the student needs to succeed in this subject.

The vote was unanimous.

Ms. McKenna asked about comments the Board heard concerning students who “opt out” of taking the MCAS. Commissioner Chester stated there is no opt-out provision; MCAS is a part of the school program and if students refuse to take the test, they are not forced to take it. Mr. Wulfson said the Department sent general guidance to schools and districts about student refusals. He said the Department does not expect schools to punish these students or to provide an alternative curriculum for them, and it is up to the school to decide where the student should be during the testing. Chair Sagan suggested the Commissioner clarify the message to the field because it appears to have been misunderstood by some members of the public.

Rescission of Obsolete Regulations on Private Occupational Schools, 603 CMR 3.00

Rhoda Schneider, General Counsel, explained that the Board can now take a final vote to rescind these obsolete regulations because the Division of Professional Licensure recently adopted its new regulations on private occupational schools. Ms. Schneider introduced Attorney Debra Comfort, who managed the legal work on this project over a period of years, along with many other accomplishments. Ms. Schneider noted that Ms. Comfort will be retiring soon and commended her for her public service to the Department and the students of the Commonwealth.

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, in accordance with G.L. c. 69, § 1B, and having solicited public comment in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act, G.L. c. 30A, § 3, hereby rescinds the Regulations on Private Occupational Schools, 603 CMR 3.00, as presented by the Commissioner.

The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Chester briefly referenced the High Quality Career Pathways initiative. He informed the Board that he will attend the Joint Committee on Ways & Means FY 2018 budget hearing on education and local aid, on Wednesday, March 29, 2017, at UMass Amherst.

VOTED: that the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education adjourn the meeting at 12:20 p.m., subject to the call of the Chair.

The vote was unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,
Mitchell D. Chester
Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education
and Secretary to the Board